



## **Attention School Nurses!**

The Texas Department of State Health Services would like to invite the children at your school to participate in a bat rabies awareness and prevention poster contest. September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2009 is World Rabies Day and events are being planned throughout the world to increase rabies awareness and promote rabies prevention.

Rabies is a viral disease that kills over 50,000 people every year around the world. Human deaths from rabies in the United States are very rare. This is due to strict animal control laws, widespread pet vaccinations, and public health intervention in identified rabies exposure cases. Many rabies exposures in Texas involve kids playing with bats. Unfortunately, there is approximately one death per year in the United States due to bat rabies. Bat bites are not always noticeable and many people are unaware that exposure to bats poses a risk. Most of these rabies exposures are preventable through education.

School grounds are the number one location in Texas for exposure to rabid bats. This is why we are encouraging school kids throughout Texas to become more aware about rabies and respecting bats and other wildlife from a distance. Children at your school can participate by entering a contest to design a poster promoting bat rabies awareness & prevention. Designers of the top three posters will win prizes and the winning posters will be used in a statewide bat rabies prevention campaign. Because of your healthcare position in the educational setting, DSHS would like to center this effort around your office. Because Texas is so large and there are so many schools, we cannot possibly judge every poster submitted. We ask that you screen the posters submitted by students in your school and send the top choice from K-5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade (one each – total 2). You could enlist help from teachers by posting the posters somewhere like the teachers lounge and having teachers vote (an example sign you can use is attached).

Please forward this information to the teachers in your school and encourage them to involve their students. It has been pointed out that science classes would be a great venue for this so you may want to limit this to science teachers, but you know your school best! Attached are an information sheet for students and an entry form containing further details and instructions. If you are interested and need additional information, feel free to contact Ms. Bonny Mayes or Dr. Skip Oertli directly. Thank you!

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF STATE HEALTH SERVICES – ZONOSIS CONTROL BRANCH

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